

When all is taken from us, we still have Faith

Written 16th April 2002 at the height of Zimbabwean farm invasions

Dear Friends,

My family and I went to Hwange National game park for a few days break. What a lovely, relaxed atmosphere - almost as if one is in a totally different world away from the problems. We need to take a break sometimes just so we can get focus again. Apart from spending time with the family, game and bird walks, (I clocked up 93 bird species including two new ones I had never seen before) I used the time to read and meditate. I read through an autobiography of Gypsy Smith, a great evangelist who in his long lifetime ministered not only in England but also many trips to the USA, France, Australia and even South Africa in 1904. It was inspiring to see what a simple man with simple faith in God could accomplish in his life's work.

Faith gets the contract

Probably the most significant statement that he made (as far as speaking to me personally was concerned) was, "*When God has big plans, faith always gets the contract.*" This statement has caused a stirring in my spirit, and over the past few days I have found myself constantly aware of the truth of those words.

Just think of all the great things God had accomplished through the pages of the Bible - who did he use? Every time it was men and women who had a simple trust in Him - people who would be willing to stare the impossible in the face and keep going forward regardless. I thought about our situation here in Zimbabwe. Surely, we are facing the impossible now. The situation has gone beyond "*getting out of hand*". Yet God is still God, and we are still His children.

Simple faith

In speaking about faith, I am not one to advocate arrogance or some great acts of heroism. Not everyone has the natural ability to act the hero. I rather think of people like Hannah the mother of Samuel, who in the quietness of her soul poured out her heart to YHWH God.

I think of the widow who put her last few copper coins into the great temple treasury - without any endeavour for others to see her plight. I think of king Hezekiah who simply brought the letter which Rabshakeh the commander of the Assyrian army had written, and spread it out before YHWH, saying, "*See what this man has written; hear and answer please*" (*Isa 37:14-20 my paraphrase*). I think of Daniel and his friends, banished to a foreign country, who at the peril of their lives, quietly refused to eat the king's meat as they would not compromise their beliefs.

And when I think of how God "*came through*" for them, then I take courage. God still hears prayers - He still cares and supports those who are willing to trust in Him. Read through Heb 11 and meditate a bit of those

wonderful stories. The "*heroes*" of faith were all really *simple, ordinary people* who trusted in God. The great king David came from nothing. He was a little shepherd boy. Jephthah was an illegitimate child, despised and banished by the rest of his family. Rahab was a harlot, Barak was a coward, and Samuel was born to a mother who had been barren.

Come to think of it, how many great people were born to barren women? Sarah, after 90 years of barrenness had Isaac, Rebekah was also barren, yet after Isaac's prayer for her she gave birth to Jacob and Esau, Rachael, also a barren woman, cried out to God for a child, and God opened her womb. She bore Joseph and Benjamin. The chosen nation of Israel was thus born out of barrenness. Manoah's wife had Samson, and of-course Hannah had Samuel; and Elizabeth had John the Baptist. That reminds me of the lovely Scripture in Isaiah

Isa 54:1-3 "Shout for joy, o Barren one, you who have borne no child; Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed;

54:2 "For the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous than the sons of the married woman, says YHWH.

54:3 "Enlarge the place of your tent; stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your pegs, for you will spread abroad to the right and to the left. And your descendants will possess nations, and they will resettle the desolate cities."

I believe we should still go forward in faith. Faith itself is an action word. It requires positive steps - like the widow putting those last few coins into the treasury, like shouting for joy - though barren, like providing shelter for the Hebrew spies, and then hanging the scarlet cord from the window (Rahab) - in anticipation of a new day dawning. And each faith action is based on a hope burned deep into the heart - a hope of redemption, a hope for a child still to be born when everything tells us it is impossible.

Our testimony

Mandy and I know that longing. Mandy was barren - and we had gone almost to the final steps of adopting a child in 1979. Yet we still believed God for a child of our own. On the day the adoption authorities phoned us to say they have a baby needing adoption, Mandy was confirmed to be pregnant. And now God has blessed us with four wonderful children. Over the years we have prayed for several barren women and found that God answered the cry of their hearts and gave them a child.

A most remarkable testimony was of a lady who had been to the Gynecologist several times and had been told that it was entirely impossible for her and her husband to have children. She came for prayer. Several weeks later her Gynae announced, with great surprise, that she was pregnant.

A God of miracles

Folks, I believe in a God of miracles. I have personally witnessed the most amazing miracles take place before

my eyes. I know many Christian men and women who have seen even more amazing miracles than I have seen. I have personally spoken to two people who were raised from the dead - though I had not been directly involved in those miracles. A friend of mine has personally prayed for blind people with no sockets in their eyes - and under their thumbs placed over the empty sockets, the eyeballs have grown, and the person has walked away seeing. That happened in Malawi.

I have seen deaf ears hearing again, and a broken arm instantly healed - and the plaster cast taken off. These might seem incredible to many, but they are nevertheless true. Apart from these great miracles, there are daily miracles of life, so numerous that we tend to take them for granted. The whole of life is really a great miracle. And the greatest miracle of all is when a man with a hard heart has his heart softened by the Spirit of God and repents from his sin - the miracle of the new spiritual birth.

Surely, our God is well able to *"come through"* for our lovely country! One of the greatest promises of Scripture is that God is *"not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance."* (2Pet 3:9) I find that the Scripture promises that God carefully *"watches over His Word to perform it"* (Jer 1:12), that He has a plan for us (Jer 29:11), and that He is returning to this earth to reap a great harvest. (Mat 13:24-30). If I then line up my desires to fit in with His desires, rather than looking out only for my own interests, then I should also have the faith and hope God has, burning in my own heart. Why not? If I then have such a hope, then why not take steps of faith towards the fulfilling of that hope?

Hope

My hope is built on the Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone. If they fail me, I will be utterly devastated. But I know that in the years that I have known the Lord, they have never failed me. So, in my *weakness and simplicity*, like a child, I trust my Heavenly Father. He would never lie to me. In Him is not one trace of lying to be found. I invite you to simply put your own hand into His big powerful hand. In your own weakness and utter devastation, in your desperation, won't you bow your hard or anxious heart, and call out to Him. Yesterday I read,

Psalm 46:10, "Cease striving and know that I am God..."

He is personally interested in each one of us, and will bring justice in His own good time. Believe on Him, and act according to that belief.

May God daily strengthen you in your time of great need.

With special love to you all

Henry D Jackson